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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [MD](#)  
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR TO FM STRATAN: MOLDOVA HURTING  
ITS IMAGE BY ACTIONS ON IRI/NDI AND MEDIA FREEDOMS

Classified by: Ambassador Asif J. Chaudhry for  
reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: In a June 12 meeting with Foreign Minister Andrei Stratan, Ambassador delivered tough points on IRI/NDI and media freedoms. Ambassador told Stratan that GOM actions were creating an increasingly negative impression of Moldova. He pointed to the GOM's recent failure to find a way for Kosova representatives to attend the RCC, register IRI and the long-standing problems with NDI. Similarly, the issues with PRO-TV's license were part of a larger problem of media freedoms that needed fixing. The Ambassador informed Stratan that at the request of President Voronin, the USG would be sending independent media experts to Moldova to study the current situation and make recommendations for fixing it. Stratan promised to inform President Voronin of the details of the conversation. End Summary.

#### IRI/NDI Problems

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¶2. (C) In a June 12 meeting Ambassador Chaudhry informed Foreign Minister Andrei Stratan that recent GOM actions were causing Moldova to lose goodwill in Washington. The post-electoral events, NDI problems, IRI registration issues, PRO-TV licensing and lack of flexibility about Kosovo's attendance at RCC were all part of a larger process creating a negative image for Moldova. IRI had applied for registration with the Government of Moldova on April 28, 2009. On June 2, IRI received a letter stating that its request had been denied. The Ambassador explained that refusing IRI's registration could have a negative impact on Moldova's MCC program and harsh treatment of IRI and NDI would reflect poorly upon Moldova with the MCC Board of Directors. The Ambassador noted that the MCC board had met on June 10 and discussed the Moldova program.

¶3. (C) On NDI, the Ambassador explained that Alex Grigorievs, would be replaced, but requested that he be allowed to stay on for a few weeks until NDI could find a replacement. If he could not stay on in Moldova, he might have to oversee the NDI operation in Chisinau from a location in Ukraine. The Ambassador asked Stratan to help get NDI registered as an organization, saying that this would project a positive image for Moldova at a moment when it most needed friends. Stratan took careful notes, promising to put the Ambassador's comments into an official message to acting President Voronin.

PRO-TV Licensing Viewed as Part of Media Freedom Problems

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14. (C) The Ambassador told Stratan that the whole world was watching Moldova to assess freedom of the press, particularly now within the context of Moldova's parliamentary elections. The Ambassador noted that the tender of PRO-TV's license had been postponed in December until after the elections. Recently, a competition had been announced for PRO-TV's frequencies. The Ambassador explained that the law provides for the Audio Visual Council to automatically renew the license for a broadcasters frequencies as long as the media outlet had not broken any laws. As PRO-TV had done nothing wrong, the station should receive automatic renewal of its frequencies. The solution to this problem was not in postponing the decision, but in issuing PRO-TV a renewal of its frequencies as a matter of right.

15. (C) The Ambassador told Stratan that Moldova could use the upcoming repeat elections to demonstrate that it could run clean elections and permit freedom of the press. He noted that the biggest problem in Moldova now was the perception that public broadcaster Moldova One is not objective. The Ambassador told Stratan that, during his last meeting with President Voronin on May 18, he had suggested that the President not

try to control the mass media, but just let them report freely. Voronin had responded that everyone complained about the media, but no one had given him any concrete examples. Voronin and the Ambassador had agreed that the USG would bring independent media experts to come to Moldova, study the current situation, and make recommendations on how to fix it. The Ambassador noted that we were working as quickly as possible to get U.S. experts, together with at least one European expert to Moldova.

Comment

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16. (C) Stratan is not a PCRM party member. He is open and frank and gets the message on actions that Moldova should take to be more forthcoming on democracy and freedom of the press. He promised to pass these messages on to President Voronin. Voronin's expressed interest in having the USG bring independent media experts to Moldova has created an opening to allow a positive impact. Voronin knows that the post-election events have created a deep rift in society. One of the opposition's most consistent demands is objective coverage by Moldova One and reform of the public broadcasters. The Embassy and its EU counterparts will be working together to keep sending the message to the GOM that this is a problem that needs to be fixed.

CHAUDHRY